



Halifax Hawks Minor Hockey Association Competitive Annual Reports 2022/23 Season

U11 Competitive – Kyle MacIsaac, Director

I am pleased to report an overall very positive year for our U11 competitive teams.

“Consistent Improvement” can best describe how our teams progressed throughout the year. We had four teams with very experienced and dedicated coaching staffs, all of whom worked diligently to assist our U11 players in improving throughout the season.

I was fortunate enough to see all our teams play and practice on numerous occasions, and I was pleased to see the effort exhibited by our players both on and off the ice.

I think the “joint” practice sessions run by the TD and his staff were immensely beneficial, and our teams remain grateful for the wealth of knowledge Tim brings to the table and the assistance he provided to our teams throughout the season.

The coaches, managers and all team staff should be commended for the time and attention they provided to the players this year and their continued selfless commitment to the experience of our youth hockey players.

U13 Competitive – Chris McKay, Director

This year the Hawks’ U13 competitive division teams enjoyed the first season free of general disruptions since 2019 – it was amazing!!! The five U13 competitive teams had great seasons, both on and off the ice, thanks in large part to the wonderful coaches and volunteers that helped pull the season together.

Team Summaries:

U13 AAA: The team finished with a 10-11-9 regular season record, finishing 9th of 16 teams in the division. The kids had a great season and made noticeable improvements in their play throughout the season thanks to the dedication of their coaches. The number of ties on the teams’ record is an indication of the team's competitiveness within the division. The team tied a very strong Bedford team on Dec 21st – Bedford finished the regular season with only 2 losses and a single tie (to the Hawks) - the Hawks U13AAA could compete with any team.

U13 AA: The team finished with a 13-7-4 regular season record, finishing 3rd of 9 teams in the division. Outside of regular session play, the team had a very successful season, winning both the Early Bird Tournament (Charlottetown) and February Freeze (Saint John), in addition to the NS Southern Conference Championship and CMHL U13AA Championship. The team’s overall record was 43-12-8-1.

U13A: The team finished with an 11-9-4 regular season record, finishing 5th of 8 teams in the division. Outside of regular season play, the team had a very successful season, winning the coveted Accord Champions during SEDMHA and finished 2nd in the CMHL Championship game. A late season charter bus trip to play Acadia U13A in Coach Tim's "Friendship Cup" was a season highlight for the players, coaches, and families. The "Friendship Cup" initiative aims to promote the values comradery and mutual respect between teams before, during, and after competition.

U13B Red: The team finished with a 4-19-1 regular season record, finishing 12th of 13 teams in the division. The team showed improvement throughout the season, having success during tournaments and finished the CMHL playoffs 4-7-1 – just short of advancing to the semi-finals. Having participated in several initiatives throughout the season, including the Orange Shirt Project, the Hawks U13B Red team spread positivity throughout the community.

U13B Black: The team finished with a 4-18-2 regular season record, finishing 10th of 13 teams in the division. The team showed noticeable improvements throughout the season and into the CMHL playoffs 1-8-3, with most games decided by a goal or two. Similar to their U13B Red friends, the U13B Black team participated in several community initiatives such as hosting a Feed NS collection as part of the Christmas with the Hawks Tournament and assisting with the Hawks U7 development sessions.

Concluding remarks - Hawks U13 teams / program was incredible this season. Having the opportunity to participate in tournaments, off-ice activities/events, and give back to their community was refreshing after a few watered-down seasons (due to COVID) and represented a return to a normal minor hockey experience for the players, coaches, and families.

Not having full rosters at the U13B level did present a few challenges throughout the season for coaches and managers. Managing call-ups from Rec and U11 created additional work for team-staff. A few late season injuries for one team shortened the bench beyond the permissible limit, meaning they needed to withdraw from SEDMHA tournament and playoff games need to be rescheduled to enable the required call-ups. During tryout registration we may want to highlight the added financial and time commitment generally observed in U13 competitive hockey, so families are making informed decisions prior to the season.

I thoroughly enjoyed following all the U13 teams this season via individual team social media pages – it was a very spirited and fun group of players, coaches, and parents. The parent and non-parent volunteers (including the parents who ran shuttle services all winter) donated countless hours enriching the season for the 80 U13 competitive players and the season could not have happened without their contribution.

Moving into the 2023/24 season, I will be remaining as U13 Competitive Director and wish those remaining at U13 and those moving into the division a successful and fun season of hockey.

U15 Competitive – Raylene Hopkins, Director

Team Results for 2022/23 Season:

U15AA – regular season 11-11-2; playoffs 3-4-1; 0-1 in provincial qualifier

U15A – regular season 7-10-7; playoffs 3-4-4; 1-1 in provincial qualifier

U15B Black – regular season 12-8-4; playoffs 4-6-1; 0-1 in provincial qualifier

U15B Red – regular season 10-10-4; playoffs 7-3-1; took home the division banner in a shootout against Tasa Black.

U15 Teams have all finished their seasons better teams than they started. Our two B teams finished 3rd and 6th in an 11-team division, with the B Red team coming out on top of the Playoffs with a big win in a shootout. The B Black team showed strong in tournaments all season, losing in a shoot out in the SEDMHA Odyssey semi final. The U15 A team struggled to get started but found some wins as the season ended, finishing SEDMHA in the final game of the civic division. The U15AA team finished middle of the pack in regular season but struggled to place in the playoffs.

Overall, the players appear to have had a fun year and there were few challenges through the year.

It has been nice to have been able to have two B level teams for the past several years. In doing so we have cut only a small number of players into C level hockey. Each year we have had a discussion around having one more competitive team or 2 less competitive team. I think we have made the correct decision again this year in allowing more players to continue to develop. Each year we have teams that are more competitive than we first expected.

Looking forward into U18 for the 2023/24, we should be looking at a B team as I am sure we have more than enough players that would stick with competitive but don't want the commitment of AA teams.

An area of improvement I think is to have a more balanced approach to the practice times, so all teams can call up from the team below. Several times, the A team was looking for players for practice, but due to home games and practices on the B teams, struggled to get players. This was the case the year before in U13 as well. Suggestion would be to have more input from directors in ice schedules prior to final assignments. Fresh set of eyes always helps. The more involved the directors are in the process, the less issues or conflicts will arise.

It was a successful season, and I am sure next year will be as well.

U18 Competitive – Tim Dauphinee, Director

We had 27 players tryout in U18, enough to ice just 1 Team: AA. Having a strong High School Hockey demand for players in our catchment area and heavy interest in U18C from our Hawks U18 group added struggle to assembling a full roster. We registered two players from East Hants including a goalie very late in the process to finalize with 18 players. Thanks to all the coaches and volunteers!

The Team went 5-14-5 in the regular season for 8th place however they were within a few points of 4th. They played the strong, more senior league leader in the provincial qualifying round losing 5-1. They had begun to build momentum towards season end and carried this momentum into a solid CMHL playoff run to take 3rd place even earning points in games with Teams who finished at the top of the regular season standings! This led to a semi-final berth and an impressive 4-3 win to advance to the Final where the Team fell 4-1 in a very respectable showing vs the lead leaders. The coaching staff deserves much credit in keeping a shortened bench focused and reaching heights that most felt this 'underdog' club could attain.

The lack of senior players was difficult to overcome, our younger, smaller Team courageously competed but will benefit with the experience of this season. Suspensions and injuries combined with a short initial roster did make management of player numbers difficult. The loss of games due to suspension did not seem abnormally high with this Team for the level/age. Available Call ups were limited as some U18C players decided not to partake and the lack of another competitive Hawks Team A or B in U18 negatively affected Call up options.

A season-long issue with a specific official culminated in a disappointing game-time decision late season by the Team to attempt avoidance of playing the game with this official in question. The Team/HC accepted fully and immediately this was ill-advised and all parties involved deemed this a learning opportunity rather than one that required discipline. I am pleased to say the Hawks, CMHL Officiating and the Team/Head Coach with a from-the-heart apology to the officiating staff all came together to right the situation and agreed to move forward.

2023/24 Season suggestions:

1. Consider combining U18 Competitive and Recreation Director into one position (possibly with an Assistant). The lines between Competitive and Rec in U18 are blurred as participants seek to play for different reasons as their focus turns to other outside activities. Many players with Competitive-like skill sets play C and divisional construction in C is tiered with Gold, for all intents and purposes, a "Competitive" level in terms of skill. Suspension rates are similar if not actually higher in C. Tryouts run consecutively of course and this would give the Director a good feel for the entire group of U18. The Call up process could be streamlined into their overall plan.
2. Request to assimilate tryout process for U18AA with potentially other association. We agreed next season we approach HNS in advance and once numbers are confirmed formally request approval to form a Hawks Team from two associations with the ability to draw AP players from both associations' C Teams.
3. Full Roster size – if available player ability allows, fill roster to maximum. Unfortunately, this season it wasn't possible to do so.
4. APs/Call Ups – practice and game attendance were a challenge this season even with great support from Rec Director. Possibly TD could help us prepare a more formal AP program with very early-season inclusive practices of those rostered plus AP/Call up hopefuls. An additional competitive Team would likely make securing affiliates more successful.
5. Mandate the Team video tape all games.

The associations discussed a potential U18B level for the 2023/24 season. The concept was unanimously supported by all associations! Many comments were made around the undercurrent and trends in hockey for more No-body-contact options. I too believe that this will become more prevalent and likely attract more players to remain in hockey as they move into older age groups. The ability to have a longer game/15-minute periods plus a weekly practice for some U18 players remains attractive. Most players we believe would be diverted from C to fill positions however as we see in U15 some may defer from AA or A electing to play in a non-checking option of competitive hockey that is currently available. U18B could be seen as a logical extension from U15B. The discussion points included:

1. Lack of players: 2 smaller associations incl Hawks cautioned we may not have enough Competitive players to form a B level Team or multiple Teams that include B.
2. Lack of tournaments: this age group traditionally has a reduced interest in this and if necessary, we felt Tournaments could be offered by CMHL Teams
3. Timing: it was too late in the preparation of the 2022/2023 season to properly plan the B league. All must regroup late this season to ensure parents can be notified of the potential options both in Spring and Summer communiques for the upcoming season. CMHL is very open to this league and was wonderfully supportive in all ways as we discussed this option. They offered to schedule it quite late to give maximum runway for associations to prepare and select Teams.
4. The last season for U18B was played with 3 Teams, all agree the league would need more Teams to have a well operating league.
5. Focus on corresponding with U15 players who are aging out plus current U18C participants regarding U18B. A poll of these members early would likely be beneficial.

Suggested Next Steps for 2023/2024 season

1. Contact other associations early about working on 1 tryout for both associations then propose to HNS. Speak to other associations unlikely to ice a U18AA Team early as there could be a player or 2 who may be interested in a Hawks tryout.
2. Discuss/identify goalie numbers very early. May need to reach out early to other associations with AA Teams who have strong goalies cut from their AA program
3. Confirm tryout dates for larger associations as there could be those who do not make their home association Team and may want to join another association to play in AA.
4. Tryout. Coaches usually run tryout and are evaluators due to small numbers. Best to have Tech Director run a couple sessions so coaches can watch more closely early.
 - a. Get player list from Admin with phone numbers
 - b. Construct Evaluation sheet (I have a template) for on ice sessions
 - c. Enlist several parents to assist in distributing jerseys, to open doors on bench for games and dressing room monitoring
5. Coordinate early with Technical Director/High Schools to understand which players are likely to play in HS league or those who will likely return to Hawks tryout. Ask for HS tryout schedule and identify cut dates. Speak with HS Coaches as some will give confidential information on who will be cut.
6. Confirm Head Coach, Manager and Safety candidate early and once in place plan to meet them/Team to sign player pledge and discuss Call-up process, suspension mitigation initiatives ...
7. Videographer a must, may need the Team to purchase a tripod etc. for the volunteers.
8. Reach out early via Recreation Coordinator to those players that are in C having checking certification for a practice to identify capable Affiliates
9. Clear all committed and potential APs very early with TD to ensure these players are qualified with Checking course to join practices/games as Call ups
10. Review set recurring Ice time schedule very early for games/practices (supplied by Hawks/TD) with coaching staff to ensure there are no major issues